

Inspection of a good school: Falconer School

Falconer Road, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD23 3AT

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Outcome

Falconer School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school where each pupil is treated as an individual. Staff know the pupils well, and relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff often join pupils in games such as basketball at break and lunchtime.

Leaders have changed the way staff respond and react to pupils' behaviour. Most pupils behave well and if upset have a variety of options open to them. Skilled staff support them to learn how to manage their feelings and behaviour. Pupils and staff are understanding of each other's needs and in caring for the distress and anxiety some pupils can feel. Leaders' analysis shows that behaviour is improving.

Pupils are taught to respect one another and to work together. Any incidents of bullying reported are followed up by staff and dealt with appropriately. Pupils are happy and have the opportunity to take part in a range of activities, such as art, sports and music.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Falconer School provides a good quality of education. The curriculum is designed to help pupils acquire new knowledge in small steps. Teachers plan work that is matched to the needs of pupils. In most subjects, the sequence of learning is planned across year groups. In English, there is more work to do to make sure topics are taught in the correct order.

Teachers make sure pupils understand their learning by revising knowledge from previous lessons. Most teachers plan interesting activities that engage pupils in their learning. At times, some activities fail to enthuse pupils. Where this happens, the pace of learning is slow.

Most pupils enjoy learning. They like being in small classes. They told us that staff understand them and help them to learn. The behaviour of most pupils in lessons is good. Staff are skilled in supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health issues. More pupils are joining the school with a wider range of additional needs. Staff are not as

confident in their approach to supporting these pupils. As a result, they may not be as successful in meeting the needs of these pupils.

Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils leave the school prepared for their next stage. A well-planned, high-quality careers programme starts in Year 7. As a result of good transition arrangements, almost all pupils progress to college. Some of these pupils do not complete their course. This is because they do not have the skills to be independent learners.

The school provides a tailored personal, social and health education course. Pupils learn about life in modern Britain and discuss topical issues. Curriculum visits introduce pupils to new experiences. For example, pupils studying cookery visit restaurants. Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities on offer. The standard of music produced by the pupils is excellent.

The school is currently phasing out alternative education placements, although pupils in Year 11 are currently completing their course. The school keeps in contact with the provider to check on pupils' attainment and attendance. Pupils following vocational courses in Year 10 study in school.

The new leadership team has the confidence of staff. They appreciate the 'open door' policy of senior leaders. Staff say leaders give them time to do their job and ensure that they receive the necessary training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Regular meetings between the safeguarding team and staff ensure that safeguarding is given high priority. Staff are well trained in this area. They are confident in the procedures to keep pupils safe. Staff report any concerns they may have. The safeguarding team is knowledgeable and diligent when following up referrals. It knows the local issues that pupils face.

Pupils know that they are helped to keep themselves safe. They know about healthy eating, online risks and keeping safe outside of school. Pupils say they feel safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In most subjects, the curriculum ensures a coherent sequence of learning across year groups. This ensures that pupils build on their prior knowledge to further develop their learning. In English, staff have correctly identified the knowledge that pupils need, but the order of teaching the information does not ensure pupils develop their knowledge and skills. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum is correctly sequenced.
- Most teachers plan activities that pupils find interesting. As a result, pupils are quick to start work and apply themselves to their learning. In some practical subjects, such as construction and music theory, activities do not interest pupils. As a result, pupils can be slow to start learning or produce work below expectations. Leaders need to provide additional training for some teachers so that they are able to provide suitable learning tasks.
- Staff are skilful in supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs to manage their behaviour and emotional outbursts. However, more pupils are joining the school with a wider range of additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorder. Staff are less confident and knowledgeable in strategies to support these pupils. Leaders need to provide training for staff in strategies to support a wider range of additional needs.
- Year 11 pupils are provided with good support when applying to college. Transition arrangements are thorough. However, some pupils do not complete their course as they find the demands of working independently too difficult. Leaders need to ensure that, during the pupils' time in school, staff provide opportunities for pupils to develop resilience and skills to work independently.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 21–22 June 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117686
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10121482
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mary Reid
Headteacher	Paul Clair
Website	www.falconer.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	21–22 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers provision for boys with social, emotional and mental health needs. An increasing number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have and an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has a new headteacher who took up post in January 2019.
- Most pupils have experienced significant periods of disruption to their education prior to joining the school.
- Admission to the school is through the local authority provisions panel.
- The school uses Building 1 zone alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- We held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, careers adviser, heads of subjects, teachers and representatives from the governing body, including the chair.
- We spoke to the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. We also spoke to staff members to gauge their understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm.
- We visited lessons across a variety of subjects. We did deep dives in mathematics, science, English and design and technology. As part of these, we spoke with pupils about their work and about other aspects of life in school. We looked at pupils' work and checked how well they are learning the curriculum.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils or staff. We took into account the 23 responses from a staff questionnaire carried out by the governing body.
- We took into account the six free-text responses from parents to Ofsted's Parent View Questionnaire.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Fyfe Johnston

Her Majesty's Inspector

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